

# U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and the 9/11 Commission Recommendations

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## Summary

While the 9/11 terrorist attacks rallied unprecedented support abroad for the United States initially, they also heightened the awareness among government officials and terrorism experts that a significant number of people, especially within Muslim populations, harbor enough hatred for America so as to become a pool for terrorists. Over time it became clear that for the global war on terrorism to succeed, sustained cooperation from around the world would be required.

In the years prior to September 11<sup>th</sup>, both Congress and the various administrations downplayed the importance of funding public diplomacy activities, and in 1999 abolished the primary public diplomacy agency—the U.S. Information Agency (USIA). Public diplomacy often was viewed as less important than political and military functions and, therefore, was seen by some legislators as a pot of money that could be tapped for funding other government activities.

Even prior to the 2001 attacks, a number of decisions by the Bush Administration, including refusing to sign onto the Kyoto Treaty, the International Criminal Court, the Chemical Weapons Ban, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, damaged foreign opinion of the United States. After the decision to go to war with Iraq, foreign opinion of the United States fell sharply, not only in the Arab and Muslim world, but even among some of America's closest allies. Some foreign policy and public diplomacy experts believe that using public diplomacy to provide clear and honest explanations of why those decisions were made could have prevented some of the loss of support in the war on terrorism.

Many U.S. policymakers now recognize the importance of how America and its policies are perceived abroad. A former Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and both chairmen of the 9/11 Commission expressed the view that public diplomacy tools are at least as important in the war on terrorism as military tools and should be given equal status and increased funding. As a result of the 9/11 Commission recommendations, Congress passed the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (S. 2845, P.L. 108-458) which included provisions expanding public diplomacy activities in Muslim populations.

At the same time, some believe that there are limits to what public diplomacy can do when the problem is not foreign misperception of America, but rather disagreements with specific U.S. foreign policies. A major expansion of U.S. public diplomacy activities and funding cannot change that, they say.

This report presents the challenges that have focused renewed attention on public diplomacy, provides background on public diplomacy, actions the Administration and Congress have taken since 9/11 to make public diplomacy more effective, as well as recommendations offered by others, particularly the 9/11 Commission. It will be updated if events warrant.

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## Introduction

Public diplomacy is the promotion of America's interests, culture and policies by informing and influencing foreign populations. Immediately after the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the Bush Administration found itself in, not only a military, but also a public diplomacy war on terrorism. An early realization of the importance of words and cultural understanding surfaced when President Bush soon after the attacks named the U.S. response "Operation Enduring Crusade," a name that was quickly changed when experts pointed out that it could be interpreted by Muslims as being inflammatory.<sup>1</sup>

In 1999/2000, according to the 2003 Pew survey, more than 50%, and as high as 83%, of foreign populations around the world held favorable views of the United States.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps because of complacency with our position in the world and with the end of the Cold War, Congress and past administrations downplayed the importance of funding public diplomacy activities.<sup>3</sup> Public diplomacy was viewed as having a lower priority than political and military functions, and received less funding, while more money went to other activities deemed more important or more popular with constituents. Funding levels for public diplomacy dropped considerably during the late 1990s, due in part to the consolidation of broadcasting entities in FY1994<sup>4</sup> and the abolishment of the U.S. Information Agency in October 1999<sup>5</sup>—signs, according to some, that public diplomacy was not highly valued.

After the 2001 attacks, people around the world expressed shock and support for the U.S. government. Since then, however, negative attitudes about America have increased and become more intense, not just within Muslim populations, but worldwide.<sup>6</sup> The Iraq War, begun in March 2003, exacerbated negative opinions of America in virtually every country polled—both traditional allies and non allies.<sup>7</sup>

Since the beginning of the Iraq War, realization emerged that strong negative public opinion about the United States could affect how helpful countries will be in the Iraq War and in the separate war on terrorism. Moreover, negative sentiment might assist terrorist groups in recruiting new members. Therefore, in recent years a sense of urgency to utilize public diplomacy to the maximum extent possible has been expressed by top level officials, think tanks, and the 9/11 Commission.

The 108<sup>th</sup> Congress weighed in on the importance of public diplomacy by including public diplomacy measures in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-458) to: promote free media in Islamic countries, scholarships for Muslims to attend American-sponsored schools, public diplomacy training in the Department of State, and establish an International Youth Opportunity Fund within an existing organization such as the United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). These initiatives will take some time

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<sup>1</sup> Bin Laden referred to the crusades (undertaken by the Christians of Europe in the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims) as one of the historical issues for which he was trying to retaliate.

<sup>2</sup> *Views of a Changing World*, by The Pew Global Attitudes Project, June 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Public diplomacy activities include international nonmilitary broadcasting, education and cultural exchanges, and international information programs.

<sup>4</sup> Title III, the United States International Broadcasting Act of 1994, P.L. 103-236.

<sup>5</sup> P.L. 105-277, Division G—Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998.

<sup>6</sup> See "Poll Results," Gallup/USA Today, February 27, 2002; and "The Ten Nations Impressions of America Poll," Zogby International, April 11, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Pew Study, p. 19.

to show any impact. Whether they can generate sufficient good will to effectively counter terrorism, however, remains to be seen.

The 109<sup>th</sup> Congress has not passed any legislation authorizing any changes in public diplomacy, but has increased public diplomacy funding. (See chart below.) Meanwhile, a 2006 Pew Survey concluded that, “The war in Iraq is a continuing drag on opinions of the United States, not only in predominately Muslim countries but in Europe and Asia as well.... Favorable opinions of the United States have fallen in most of the 15 countries surveyed.”<sup>8</sup>

## Background on Public Diplomacy

### History

The U.S. government first officially acknowledged its use of public diplomacy activities in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when President Woodrow Wilson created the Committee on Public Information to disseminate information overseas during World War I.

In 1941 when World War II broke out, President Roosevelt established the Foreign Information Service to conduct foreign intelligence and propaganda. The next year President Roosevelt created the Office of War Information (OWI) which aired the first Voice of America (VOA) program on February 24, 1942 in Europe. These activities were carried out without any authority or recognition provided by Congress.

Popularly referred to as the Smith-Mundt Act,<sup>9</sup> the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 (P.L. 80-402) provided the first overarching legislation authorizing broadcasting and cultural activities, although they had already been going on throughout the 1940s. According to Senator Smith:

This bill is an attempt to give legislative authority to certain activities that have been carried on by the State Department since the close of the war.... It is really the consolidation of the activities of the State Department’s Division of Cultural Relations, the Office of Inter-American Affairs and the so-called Office of War Information.<sup>10</sup>

In asserting how inadequate the U.S. government had been at being understood in Europe and countering Russia’s hostile information campaign against the United States after the War, Senator Smith described his intentions for the legislation: “This does not mean boastful propaganda, but simply means telling the truth.”<sup>11</sup>

There must be a distinct set-up of the so-called informational service, on the one hand, which may conceivably have certain propaganda implications and may even become involved politically; and on the other hand, we must set apart by itself the so-called educational exchange service which, if it is to be truly effective, must be objective, nonpolitical, and, above all, have no possible propaganda implications.<sup>12</sup>

Over the years, several public diplomacy reorganizations and policy changes have occurred, largely for two reasons—to reduce cost or to increase effectiveness. In 1953, President

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<sup>8</sup> *America’s Image Slips, but Allies Share U.S. Concerns over Iran, Hamas*, by The Pew Global Attitudes Project, June 13, 2006, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Named for the two primary sponsors of the legislation were Representative Karl Mundt (Republican from South Dakota) and Senator Alexander Smith (Republican from New Jersey).

<sup>10</sup> *Congressional Record*, January 16, 1948, p. 243.

<sup>11</sup> *Congressional Record*, January 16, 1948, p. 244.

<sup>12</sup> *Congressional Record*, statement by Senator Alexander Smith, January 16, 1948, p. 246.

Eisenhower created the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) in the Reorganization Plan No. 8, as authorized by the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948. At the time of its creation, USIA's role was primarily to administer the broadcasting and information programs (referred to by some at the time as the "propaganda activities"). The educational exchange programs remained within the Department of State to avoid any charges of propagandistic intent, as recommended by Senator Fulbright (who had already sponsored legislation on establishing cultural exchanges).

At about the same time, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) began broadcasting in 1950 under the clandestine auspices of the Central Intelligence Agency which had been created in 1947.<sup>13</sup> The Board for International Broadcasting (BIB) was created in 1973 to fund and oversee RFE/RL operations. RFE/RL thus became a private, nonprofit broadcaster receiving government grants through the BIB. The purpose of BIB was to provide a firewall between the U.S. government (the CIA) and RFE/RL's surrogate broadcasting to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The idea was that by keeping RFE/RL separate from the U.S. government, its credibility would be increased.

The Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1977 consolidated all functions of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the USIA's international information and broadcasting activities into the International Communication Agency (ICA). Subsequently in 1982, Section 303(b) of P.L. 97-241 renamed ICA to be the U.S. Information Agency.

In 1994 Congress removed international broadcasting from the USIA, created the independent Broadcasting Board of Governors, and authorized the phasing out of the Board of International Broadcasting.<sup>14</sup>

On October 1, 1999, as a result of legislation initiated by Senator Helms, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to reorganize the foreign policy agencies (largely for streamlining and budget saving purposes), USIA was abolished and its remaining functions (information programs and the educational and cultural exchanges) were transferred back to the State Department, as exchanges had been prior to 1977.<sup>15</sup>

In an FY2004 House Commerce, Justice, State Department (CJS) Subcommittee on Appropriations hearing, Chairman Frank Wolf wondered aloud, "Maybe we made a mistake ... on the abolition of USIA.... I wonder if the reorganization ... was really a mistake and maybe somebody ought to go back.... And maybe the system we had in place that we used to defeat the Soviet Union really is not a bad system that we should have in effect now to deal with this [terrorist] issue."<sup>16</sup>

## **Funding**

In 1980, the U.S. government spent \$518 million on public diplomacy activities, according to the Office of Budget and Management (OMB). Funding increased over the following years and peaked in FY1994 to nearly \$1.5 billion, largely due to costs associated with the consolidation of the broadcasting entities. The President's FY2007 budget request of nearly \$1.6 billion, if enacted, would set the record for U.S. government public diplomacy expenditures. Significant declines in funding during the late 1990s occurred partly because of the budget savings that emanated from consolidating broadcasting in 1994 and abolishing the USIA in 1999. Actual

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<sup>13</sup> The radios had been funded ostensibly through contributions from the American public.

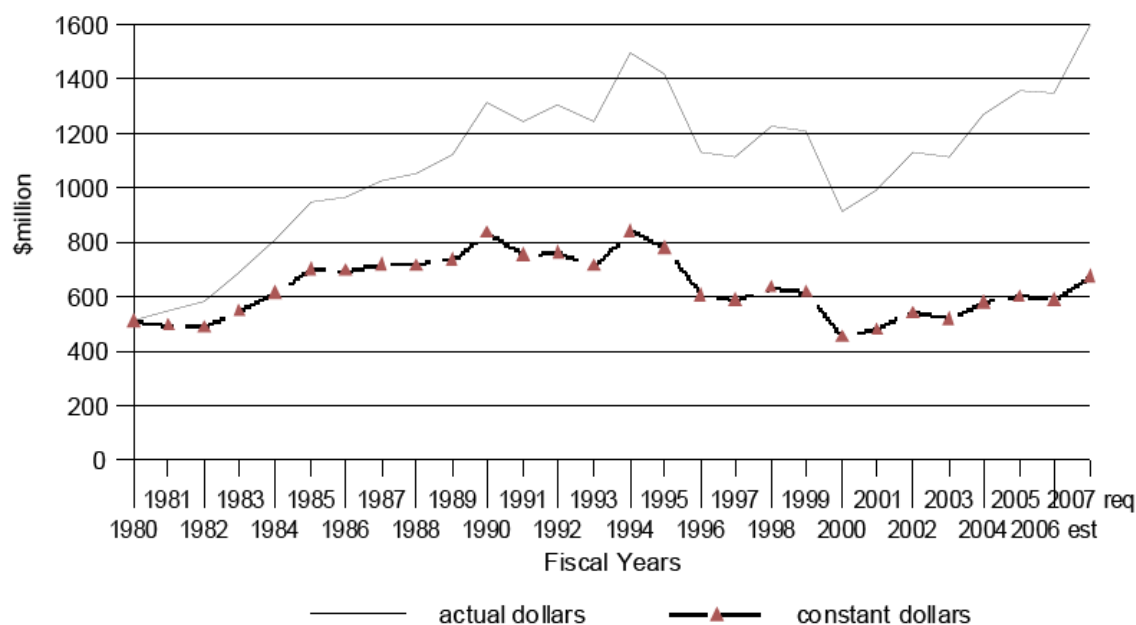
<sup>14</sup> Title III, P.L. 103-236.

<sup>15</sup> P.L. 105-277.

<sup>16</sup> Commerce, Justice, State Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee hearing on Public Diplomacy, February 4, 2004.

funding levels in FY2000, FY2001, and FY2002 were higher than in 1980—\$770 million, \$712 million and \$747 million, respectively. In constant dollars, however, funding in FY2000, FY2001, and FY2002 dropped below FY1980 levels. And in FY2006, while the estimated actual dollar amount is more than 2½ times what it was in FY1980, in constant dollars the funding level is only about 15% higher. (See **Figure 1** below.)

**Figure 1. U.S. Government Expenditures on Public Diplomacy, FY1980-FY2007 req.**



**Source:** Office of Management and Budget, and CRS calculations.

Since the terrorist attacks, new funding designated for public diplomacy within State's Diplomatic and Consular Programs account has been added through both supplemental and regular appropriations. Supplemental funding has become a standard practice for funding public diplomacy activities. Between FY2002 and FY2005, public diplomacy activities received about \$190 million within emergency supplemental appropriations, including about \$25 million for public diplomacy funds within the Diplomatic and Consular Programs account, \$15 million for the Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs account, and about \$150 million for international broadcasting activities. Supplemental funds through FY2005 are included in **Figure 1**. For FY2006, the Administration is seeking within emergency supplemental funding an additional \$5 million for Educational and Cultural Exchanges and \$50 million for international broadcasting activities both having to do with Iran. Congress provided \$5 million for exchanges and \$36 million for broadcasting into Iran in the FY2006 emergency supplemental package (P.L. 109-234, signed into law June 15, 2006). (For more detail, see CRS Report RL31370, *State Department and Related Agencies: FY2006 and FY2007 Appropriations and FY2008 Request*, by Susan B. Epstein.)

Despite the recent increases in public diplomacy funding, critics point to what they view as meager funding levels for public diplomacy as compared to military and other expenses (in the billions of dollars) to combat terrorism. Some assert that as the world gets smaller due to information technology, being vigilant about foreign populations' attitudes of America is as important and less costly, perhaps, than a buildup of military strength.



## **Activities**

Public diplomacy primarily consists of three categories of activities: (1) international information programs, (2) educational and cultural exchange programs, and (3) international nonmilitary broadcasting. The Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs administers the Bureau for International Information Programs and the Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs, while the Broadcasting Board of Governors manages and oversees international broadcasting.

### **The International Information Programs (IIP)**

The Office of International Information Programs (IIP) acts as a strategic communications service for the foreign affairs community. The office puts out a variety of information in a number of languages and forms, including print publications, Internet reports, and in-person or video-conferencing speaker programs. These information products and services are designed to reach key audiences such as foreign media, government officials, cultural opinion leaders, as well as the general population in more than 140 countries. Some of the products include regionally-oriented printed and Internet reports prepared by teams of writers, researchers, and translators; issue-oriented reports on topics such as economic security, global issues, U.S. society and values, and democracy/human rights; speaker programs—over one thousand speakers go abroad annually to discuss issues of importance to particular regions, as identified by U.S. embassies; and Information Resource Centers (IRC) support both embassy staff and local populations with information on U.S. policy.

### **The Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)**

The Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs fosters mutual understanding between the United States and other countries through international educational exchanges, scholarships, and training programs. The Bureau administers programs ranging from the Fulbright Program (which provides grants for graduate students, scholars, professionals, teachers and administrators) to the Humphrey Fellowships (which brings mid-level professionals from developing countries to the United States for a year of study and professional experiences) to the International Visitor Program (which brings professionals to the United States to confer with professional counterparts) to the Office of Citizen Exchanges (which develops professional, cultural, and youth programs with non-profit American Institutions, including voluntary community organizations). International exchange programs often are viewed as low cost, low risk, and effective ways of promoting the American culture abroad. Drawbacks include the length of time and high cost to change attitudes of a significant portion of a foreign population since the program touches only a few people at a time (as opposed to broadcasting where thousands of people can be reached instantaneously).

In past years some concerns that had surfaced regarding exchanges included

- the lack of a tracking system to prevent exchange program participants from overstaying their visas in the United States;
- changes in student's study focus—students who might enroll in a U.S. exchange program to study English, for example, but would change to physics or engineering (courses associated with security concerns) upon arriving in the United States;



- an over-concentration on exchanges with European countries rather than developing countries where a greater potential exists for participants to learn about the United States and then go back to teach others in their own country.

These issues have been, or are being, addressed so that exchanges can be more effective in addressing terrorism and security issues of exchange participants while reaching Muslim and Arab participants.

## **International Broadcasting**

International broadcasting consists of general broadcasting—the Voice of America (radio, TV and Internet), numerous surrogate broadcasting entities—Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Cuba Broadcasting, Radio Free Asia, Radio Free Afghanistan, Radio Farda (Iran), Radio Free Iraq, and Radio Sawa,<sup>17</sup> as well as the Middle East Television Network (Alhurra). The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), a bipartisan board consisting of 9 members who are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, supervises and administers these broadcasting entities. In recent years, the BBG has incorporated much of its broadcasting on the Internet where it can reach significant numbers of people in Asia and the Middle East.

In times of crisis, such as in Kosovo in the 1990s, after the 2001 terrorist attacks, or during the war in Iraq, U.S. international broadcasting goes into “surge broadcasting” mode which may include Expanded coverage of events as they unfold and in the languages of the populations being affected; creating a new broadcast medium, such as satellite TV, in an area where the U.S. previously did not operate one; increasing interviews with U.S. government officials, Congress and experts from think-tanks giving the American perspective of the situation; and cooperating with other countries’ broadcast operations to achieve a 24 hour-a-day broadcasting operation into a region being affected.

## **Targeted Public Diplomacy Post 9/11**

The U.S. government has always targeted public diplomacy to some degree. From its earliest years, public diplomacy was targeted to reach audiences in Europe to influence the outcome of World War I and World War II. It was later used primarily in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to help end the Cold War.

In recent years, Congress and the Administration have sought ways to use public diplomacy tools to influence Muslim and Arab populations to combat terrorism, improve coordination of public diplomacy activities throughout the government (via the Policy Coordinating Committee, or PCC), increase funding through regular and supplemental appropriations, and better evaluate current programs to gain future effectiveness.

One of the most visible examples of public diplomacy soon after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks was Secretary of State Colin Powell’s appearance on MTV in February 2002, reaching out to, and candidly answering questions from, young people around the world about what America represents. MTV at that time reached 375 million households in 63 countries worldwide.

Other public diplomacy actions over the past three years targeted toward Arab and Muslim populations occurred in all three categories of public diplomacy, specifically emphasizing such

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<sup>17</sup> Surrogate broadcasting is intended to provide objective regional news and information to closed societies. The mission of general broadcasting (VOA) is to be a reliable source of global news and present America’s policies, institutions, and opinions.

concepts as religious tolerance, ethnic diversity, the importance of an independent media, elections and educational reform.<sup>18</sup>

## **Information Programs**

With the help of \$25 million of supplemental funding designated for public diplomacy in various post 9/11 supplemental appropriations and much more designated in the regular appropriations process, IIP developed new programs in recent years to promote America's image and reach larger Muslim and Arab audiences. For example, the Bureau tripled the publishing of text in Arabic, developed an Arabic-language magazine and started a Persian language website. IIP increased to 140 the number of overseas multi-media centers called American Corners—rooms in office buildings or on campuses where students, teachers, and the general public can learn America's story through the use of books, computers, magazines and video. Another 60 American Corners are expected to be established in 2004 with an emphasis on locating them among Muslim populations. And, IIP established Strategic Information, a counter-disinformation capability to provide rapid response to inaccurate stories or misinterpretations of fact about the United States. Since September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Department of State has targeted toward the Middle East millions of dollars for IIP-related activities. In recent years, IIP funding for Muslim-related activities totaled \$8.69 million in FY2004, \$9.11 million in FY2005, and \$8.76 million in FY2006.<sup>19</sup>

## **Exchanges**

After 9/11, ECA refocused its efforts toward Muslim and Arab populations. Since then, according to the Department of State, about \$175 million in funding has supported exchange programs with Muslims and Arabs.

Soon after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the Department of State began working to promote exchanges between the United States and Afghanistan. For example, in November 2002, the Bureau, in cooperation with American women CEOs, brought 49 Arab women who are political activists or leaders from 15 different countries to the United States in November 2002. They met with political candidates, lobbyists, strategists, journalists and voters and followed the American election process and election night. Also in the Fall of 2002, 14 Afghani women representing 5 ministries and the Kabul Security Court in the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> Afghanistan government came to the United States to gain computer and writing skills, as well as how to re-enter and contribute to the civil service in a reconstructed Afghanistan government.<sup>20</sup> And on December 9, 2003 the ECA brought the Iraqi National Symphony to Washington, D.C. to join in a performance with the National Symphony Orchestra.

Broader programs include the Partnership for Learning (P4L) which is an effort to reach youth in Arab and Muslim countries. Since 2002, about \$84 million has been spent on this program to, among other things, establish for the first time a high school program with Arab and Muslim students living with American families and attending American high schools. The Youth Exchange and Study Program (YES), also referred to as the Cultural Bridges Program, grew out

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<sup>18</sup> Testimony by Patricia Harrison, Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, House International Relations Committee hearing: 9/11 Commission Recommendations for U.S. Diplomacy, August 24, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Funding levels provided by the Bureau of International Information Programs, Department of State, May 1, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> One drawback to these programs is that there can be unintended consequences. Some women who have participated in them have gone back to Afghanistan with fear, as a result of participating in the program and, in one case, the woman left her job after being seen on television, without a head scarf, meeting with President Bush. See the *Washington Post*, January 9, 2003, page A20.

of the P4L concept and led to a more comprehensive approach in which the Department now addresses all levels of education, from secondary to graduate level, within its exchange programs.

## International Broadcasting

Soon after the 2001 attacks and military action in Afghanistan, VOA expanded its broadcasts to Afghanistan and the Middle East, featuring coverage of events in the United States, as well as in the region. Expanded broadcasts were initiated in Arabic, Dari, Farsi, Pashto and Urdu languages. VOA estimated through surveys that 80% of adult males in Afghanistan listen to VOA and give it high marks for credibility and objectivity. An emergency supplemental appropriation (P.L. 107-38) provided \$12.25 million to support VOA broadcasting in Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, Dari and Urdu, and RFE/RL broadcasts in Arabic, Farsi, Tajik, Turkmen, Uzbek, Kazakh, Krygyz, and Azeri. The BBG is continuing 24 hour-a-day, seven days per week broadcasting into Afghanistan.

In the Middle East, the Broadcasting Board of Governors has significantly expanded news programming into Iraq through the creation of a surrogate news and entertainment radio station—Radio Sawa—and a new television—Middle East Television Network (METN), promoted as *Alhurra* (*the free one*). Also hoping to increase its influence in Iran, the BBG expanded TV programming, as well as programming on the surrogate Persian language radio station, Radio Farda. Expenditures for broadcasting directly related to the war on terrorism amounted to \$66.9 million in FY2002, \$106.3 million in FY2003, \$225.3 million in FY2004, \$241.1 million in FY2005, and an estimated \$249.1 million in FY2006. The Administration FY2007 request for international broadcasting having to do with the war on terrorism is \$274.4 million. (For more information on Middle East broadcasting, see CRS Report RS21565, *The Middle East Television Network: An Overview*, by Jeremy M. Sharp.)

## 9/11 Commission Recommendations

Despite all that has been accomplished in revamping U.S. public diplomacy in the last three years to better respond to the terrorism threat, the questions arise: is it worth it and is it enough? Then-National Security Council Advisor, Condoleezza Rice cited the new initiatives but conceded that more needed to be done. She recommended the creation of sister cities programs, student and professional exchanges, and language and area studies programs that focus on the Muslim world.<sup>21</sup>

U.S. public diplomacy has been viewed by some as overseas PR, but congressional testimony in 2004 by members of the 9/11 Commission suggest that it goes much deeper than that. Public diplomacy, they said, must now be viewed as a dialogue, not a monologue, to reach a deeper understanding between societies and build long-term relationships and trust between government officials and their societies. “If we don’t have long-term relationships with Muslim populations, we cannot have trust. Without trust, public diplomacy is ineffective.”<sup>22</sup>

The 9/11 Commission Report stated that the U.S. government must use all its tools to win the war on terrorism. Former Governor Thomas Kean testified before Congress in August 2004 that terrorism is our number one threat now and that public diplomacy is one tool among many that should be used to combat the ongoing war against terrorism. “If we favor any [tools] and neglect

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<sup>21</sup> Speech at the U.S. Institute of Peace, August 19, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> House International Relations Committee hearing, 9/11 Commission Recommendations for U.S. Diplomacy, August 24, 2004, Thomas Kean, Chairman of the 9/11 Commission.

others, we leave ourselves vulnerable.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly, a former Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy, stated recently that “activities associated with public diplomacy need to be seriously prioritized on an equal level with an aircraft carrier. Both are equally important.”<sup>24</sup>

Among the specific recommendations, the 9/11 Commission suggested giving the Broadcasting Board of Governors increased funding to do more broadcasting to Arab and Muslim populations. Enacted BBG total appropriations in recent years have ranged from \$420 million in FY2000 to \$599.6 million in FY2005. Post 9/11 emergency supplemental appropriations to date have totaled \$143.7 million for BBG.<sup>25</sup>

The 9/11 Report recommended that, just as the United States did during the Cold War, this country should identify what it stands for and communicate that message clearly. In addition to more funding for international broadcasting, the Commission urged increased funding for more exchanges, scholarships, and libraries overseas and asserted that whenever assistance is provided, it should be clearly identified as coming from the citizens of the United States. Chairman Thomas Kean asserted in recent testimony that (excluding Iraq) Egypt is the second largest recipient of U.S. assistance, yet only 15% of Egyptians have a favorable view of Americans, according to polls.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to bilateral programs, the Commission recommended that the U.S. government join with other nations in generously supporting a new International Youth Opportunity Fund. The Report stated that education and literacy lead to economic opportunity and freedom; therefore, better textbooks that do not teach racism or hatred to Arab and Muslim children, and offering a choice of schools other than extremist madrassas are among the steps that may be key to eliminating Islamist terrorism.

Another multilateral approach the Commission recommended is the establishment of a forum, perhaps modeled after the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), for engaging both Western and Arab and Muslim representatives to discuss each culture’s needs and perspectives. An organization of this nature, said the Commission, would help create long-term relationships and understanding among all countries. Improved relationships would lead to cooperation and trust among Western and Muslim populations, which is critical for containing or eliminating global terrorism, the Report said.

The Commission emphasized that the vast majority of Muslims worldwide are moderates who do not agree with violence. In contrast, the Commission stated that the Islamist terrorists hate America and all that it stands for, and violence and terror are their weapons against the United States. The Commission asserted that the United States, through public diplomacy, can find a way to drive a wedge between the two groups. We can gain the support of the moderate majority by exporting optimism and hope for a good future for their children through public diplomacy, the Commission reported.

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<sup>23</sup> The 9-11 Commission Recommendations on Public Diplomacy: Defending Ideals and Defining the Message, hearing before the House Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations, August 23, 2004.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Struggles to Win Hearts and Minds in the Muslim World, *Washington Post*, August 20, 2004, p. A1.

<sup>25</sup> Supplementals include P.L. 107-38, P.L. 107-117, P.L. 107-206, P.L. 108-11, P.L. 108-106.

<sup>26</sup> House Government Reform Subcommittee hearing: The 9/11 Commission Recommendations on Public Diplomacy: Defending Ideals and Defining the Message, August 23, 2004.

## Other Options

Prior to establishment of the 9/11 Commission, several organizations studied public diplomacy in order to improve international goodwill and America's image, as well as to combat terrorism. The Council on Foreign Relations, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, and the Broadcasting Board of Governors, in addition to some Members of Congress and congressional committees, offered suggestions intended to elevate public diplomacy and make it more effective.<sup>27</sup> Some options follow:

- Create a Corporation for Public Diplomacy with tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. tax code, that would receive private sector grants and coordinate private and public sector involvement in public diplomacy;
- Reconstitute USIA or some other entity that would have U.S. public diplomacy as its sole mission;
- Increase the emphasis on public diplomacy throughout all U.S. government agencies, with organizational changes in the White House, National Security Council, and the State Department;
- Require all foreign policy agencies to train key staff in public diplomacy and languages; and
- Measure the success of public diplomacy efforts by blending the best practices used in the public and private sectors, and improve public diplomacy program effectiveness with the knowledge attained.

## Conclusion

Public diplomacy is one of numerous tools that the United States has used since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to promote U.S. interests abroad. Over the decades since its formal authorization by the Smith-Mundt Act of 1948, views have fluctuated between vigorously supporting public diplomacy as a highly valuable foreign policy tool and disparaging it as a government program with no constituency and uncertain long-term benefits. After the end of the Cold War, many in Congress questioned the expense and abolished the USIA, moving public diplomacy into the Department of State where it could be more closely coordinated with other foreign policy tools.

Since the terrorist attacks in 2001, many in Congress have advocated an increase in public diplomacy funding to “win the hearts and minds of Muslims” and, perhaps, help prevent future attacks. The 9/11 Commission Report agreed with significantly increasing the budget and status of public diplomacy as has been done with the military.

Some foreign policy experts and Members of Congress have cautioned, however, that public diplomacy is only good if the message is credible. Recent worldwide polls show that the United States government continues to be viewed with skepticism by much of the world, not just among Arab and Muslim populations. When the message isn't consistent with what people see or experience independently, many assert, public diplomacy is not effective. Furthermore, they say, if U.S. foreign policy is the primary cause of negative foreign opinion, then public diplomacy

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<sup>27</sup> Studies include “Public Diplomacy and the War on Terrorism,” Peter G. Peterson, Council on Foreign Relations, *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 81, No. 5, September/October 2002; U.S. Public Diplomacy, State Department Expands Efforts but Faces Significant Challenges, U.S. General Accounting Office, GAO-03-951, September 2003; Changing Minds Winning Peace, Report of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, October 1, 2003; and Marrying the Mission to the Market Strategic Plan 2002-2007, Broadcasting Board of Governors.

may be less effective than lawmakers would like. America could benefit, however, if in this view, the government uses public diplomacy more proactively to clearly and truthfully explain U.S. foreign policy actions, rather than appearing indifferent to world opinion.

According to the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, “Spin and manipulative public relations and propaganda are not the answer. ...Sugar-coating and fast talking are not solutions, nor is absenting ourselves.”<sup>28</sup>

And as Edward R. Murrow (USIA Director, 1961 - 1964) said in 1963 before a House Subcommittee regarding U.S. public diplomacy activities:

American traditions and the American ethic require us to be truthful.... truth is the best propaganda and lies are the worst. To be persuasive we must be believable; to be believable we must be credible; to be credible we must be truthful. It is as simple as that.

## Related Legislation

### **P.L. 108-458 (S. 2845)**

Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. A bill to reform the intelligence community and the intelligence and intelligence-related activities of the United States Government, and for other purposes. Introduced September 23, 2004. S.Amdt. 3942 would increase in Muslim populations public diplomacy activities including through increased broadcasting, educational exchanges, and establishing the International Youth Opportunity Fund. The President signed it into law (P.L. 108-458) on December 17, 2004.

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<sup>28</sup> Changing Minds Winning Peace, a report by the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, October 1, 2003, p. 18.